

**AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT TEAMS AND
THE COUNTERINSURGENCY
EFFORT IN AFGHANISTAN**

BY

**COLONEL RONDAL L. TURNER
United States Army National Guard**

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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EFFORT IN AFGHANISTAN**

by

Colonel Rondal L. Turner
United States Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel David G. Bolgiano
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT TEAMS AND THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT IN AFGHANISTAN

In December 2009, President Obama stated, “Our top reconstruction priority is implementing a civilian-military agricultural development strategy to restore Afghanistan’s once vibrant agriculture sector.”¹ Agriculture Development Teams (ADTs) in Afghanistan assist in obtaining our national objectives by bringing together all elements of national power in the counter-insurgency fight and can aid in creating the desired effects: a free and democratic Afghanistan. “Almost eighty percent of the population of Afghanistan is economically linked to the agricultural sector.”² Agriculture is the main source of legitimate income for the Afghan economy. Despite the fact that such a large majority of Afghanistan’s population is involved in farming, herding, or both, much of Afghanistan’s arable land remains unused due to non-cultivation and a dearth of personnel with modern agrarian skills.

Innovative programs such as the ADTs stress the importance of agriculture development to the country and will assist in creating the security and stability needed for an enduring and independent Afghanistan. The ADTs bring all elements of power – diplomatic, informational, military, and economic – together in concert to help Afghanistan succeed. The Afghan farmers can begin to improve their own lives through their proven long-term farming practices brought to successful culmination by interagency efforts’ inclusion of ADTs. These practices may also help to contain the narcotics trade within the region by planting, growing and marketing lawful commercial crops. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently stated, “We expect the National Guard to continue to play a significant role in Afghanistan, and in areas beyond combat

operations; agricultural, rule of law and governance, among them.”³ He specifically cited the benefit of National Guard ADTs who bring agricultural expertise to the effort. Further he stated, “When you bring Guardsmen with this kind of experience, it has a huge impact.”⁴

National Guard ADTs have been in Afghanistan for over two years. This paper will explore the effectiveness of ADTs in Afghanistan by assessing the challenges in that country and region through the lenses of all of the national elements of power to determine if this specific non-kinetic approach might be effective. First, one must examine the capacity, topography and history of agriculture within the region to better discern what the priorities of effort need to be to put Afghans on a path of sustainable development.

History, Capacity and Topography of Afghanistan

Agriculture is essential to Afghanistan. Despite the fact that only 11.5 percent (7.5 million hectares) of Afghanistan’s total area is cultivable, 85 percent of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood, and 80 percent of export earnings and more than 50 percent of the gross domestic product have historically come from agriculture.⁵

Only a relatively small part of the land area of Afghanistan is suitable for arable farming or horticulture, including both irrigated as well as rain-fed farming. While 85 percent of the population derive their main livelihood from arable farming, horticulture and livestock husbandry – often in combination – more than half of all irrigated arable land lies north of the main Hindu Kush range in the drainage systems of the Amu Darya River. Wheat is the main crop cultivated on both irrigated and rain-fed land throughout the country, resulting in Afghanistan’s cultural dependence on bread as the staple diet.

Rather sophisticated traditional crop rotations are practiced in many places, including a combination of cereal crops with a variety of pulses and fodder crops.

“Afghanistan has also long been noted for many kinds of fruit (including apricots, apples, pomegranates, and grapes) and nuts (principally almonds, walnuts and wild pistachio). Such crops can provide twenty times more profitable income than wheat from the equivalent area. In the 1970s dried fruit, raisins and nuts contributed more than 40 per cent of the country’s foreign exchange earnings, although the years of conflict have meant that the country has lost some of its former market niches. The rapid expansion of orchard plantations and the adoption of modern systems and varieties occurred between 1989 and 1999.”⁶ This positive trend, however, has been greatly attenuated by severe drought over the past several years.

This positive side of Afghan agricultural production also has its dark sister: opium production. “In recent years Afghanistan has earned notoriety as the world’s largest producer of opium, contributing some 75 percent of the global supply.”⁷ Although illegal, cultivation of poppies for heroin and opium production is the most important and lucrative industry in Afghanistan. “Foreign agencies have led a campaign against poppy-growing, but Afghanistan still produces more than 90% of the world’s opium. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that local production of opium fell by 6% in 2008 from the record level reached in 2007, owing partly to successful efforts to reduce cultivation and partly to drought. However, local opium output still exceeded global demand. UNODC surveys have found reduced planting of poppies in early 2009, which will cut opium output further this year. It is predicted that some provinces may increase production in 2010, depending on security issues, the attitude of local authorities towards eradication, and the viability of other crops. Potential earnings for farmers from poppies remain higher than those from most other crops, despite the rise

in wheat prices in 2008. Rural financing systems offered by drug traffickers further reduce the risks associated with poppy farming.”⁸

The opium poppy has been cultivated for many centuries in Afghanistan, but the period of conflict over the past two decades in conjunction with increased worldwide demand has led to a massive expansion in production. “In the southwest and eastern provinces, in particular Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzghan, Nangarhar, Laghman and Kunar, opium poppy has increasingly replaced wheat as the most significant autumn-sown cash crop and as a spring-sown crop in Badakhshan province due to the high market values of the product and Taliban rule. The price of opium gum has risen dramatically from about US \$30 per kg in 2000 to its current level of about US \$350 – US \$400 per kg since late 2002. Wheat is the main seasonal competitor crop for opium poppy. Unfortunately, however, it is estimated that a hectare crop of wheat might earn a farmer US \$440, the equivalent land sown to poppy will earn as much as five that amount.”⁹

This makes opium an almost irresistible crop for rural families struggling to rebuild their lives and improve their livelihoods. “It is hardly a surprise to find that 2002 also saw the spread of poppy cultivation into a number of provinces and districts where it had not been cultivated previously.”¹⁰

Despite the devastating effect of opium cultivation on more benign agricultural endeavors, the opportunity for sustained growth in alternative crops must remain at the top of any effort to instill more peaceful and lasting governance to the region. Much of the knowledge and capacity to develop such benign agriculture has been lost over the past 30 years because of the ubiquity of the poppy crop. The need exists for

responsive and effective agricultural training teams to teach modern agricultural techniques to Afghan farmers interested in developing lucrative and productive benign agriculture. Therein lays the need and efficacy of the ADTs.

History of Agricultural Development Teams

Prior to 2008, all agricultural development conducted in the Afghanistan theatre of operation was conducted by Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). In Afghanistan all PRTs are led by the U.S. Department of Defense. PRTs are predominantly military with a mix of force protection, civil affairs and specialists from other governmental organizations. PRTs average between 50 – 100 personnel and are extensively used throughout Afghanistan often in combination with ADTs, which can be a sub-component. Agricultural experts, while few in number now, are slated to double this year. PRTs generally include representatives from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Justice. A PRT is typically commanded by a military officer in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The Commander is supported by a civil affairs team and a platoon of Soldiers used for security. There is no lead agency or department; the US government civilians and the military commander form an executive committee of equals. This leadership team develops a strategy for the PRT, drawing on the expertise of all contributing agencies. These team activities in Afghanistan focus on extending the reach of the central government into the provinces. The PRT, although still in existence and operating under the control of the BCT, has been augmented in recent years by a highly skilled group of personnel with a unique skill set designed to focus more on the agricultural aspects of the mission: the ADT.

The first National Guard ADT from the Missouri National Guard arrived in Afghanistan in February of 2008. The first team received cooperation and input from a diverse group of civilian agencies and organizations to include the Missouri Farm Bureau, The University of Missouri, and Lincoln University. The deploying personnel had extensive backgrounds in agronomy, veterinary medicine, hydrology, marketing, soil science, and engineering. These military - agriculture experts began teaching the Afghans the basic skills needed to grow and harvest crops. They met with local Afghani tribes of the respective regions, central government representatives, religious leaders, and business leaders ensuring that each member of the team was fully utilized. The teams focused on building relationships and trust among these diverse Afghan people. The success of this initial ADT spawned interest and a growing requirement.

There are currently eight teams serving in Afghanistan with units from many states having enduring missions with commitments to return for multiple years. These teams are made up of both Army Guard and Air Guard personnel. Their intent and effect is to influence the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. In accordance with Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine of minimizing or mitigating the influences of the Taliban while simultaneously demonstrating that the Afghan government is concerned with their welfare, the ADTs provide relevant and fruitful training that directly and enduringly benefit the affected communities. They help to build that public trust that opens the door for a lasting diplomatic effort on other fronts.

Diplomatic

The too often overlooked first element of national power is Diplomacy. Concerning the need for future diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in 2004 said, "The collapse of social cohesion and public trust in state

institutions are a crippling legacy of war.”¹¹ Dialogue is the key to building trust, rapport, and an enduring relationship in post conflict situations. The United States and the other NATO states that are involved in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) show no immediate signs of disengaging from Afghanistan. Several, notably the US, France, and the UK, have recently sent more troops. However, due to continuing violence, corruption and seeming intractable sectarian resistance to central governance, there are misgivings on the part of the some governments and the general public over rising casualties, economic costs and the long-term prospects for their military missions in Afghanistan. Many believe that a purely military, and certainly kinetic, solution will not lead to long-term success and that more efforts must be made on the diplomatic front to encourage institution building and a more viable and stable society.

To that end, the diplomatic experience that the ADTs bring to the mission can be an effective platform for enhancing dialogue, building confidence, sharing interests, and increasing cooperation amongst the disparate peoples and tribes of Afghanistan. Trade in Agriculture can be a strong palliative to economic uncertainty and can positively impact local social groups across ethnic, tribal, and party differences. While a part of the military, ADTs are really a hybrid in that they work across the interagency in association with USAID and Department of State. This cross-governmental approach assists in a collaboration and unity of effort leveraging the strengths of each agency while filling the gaps in capacity that may otherwise exist. Department of State provides expertise concerning governmental processes and USAID assists with its myriad projects. ADTs provide the expertise on the ground with the local villages, while simultaneously providing the military advantages of security and order. This unity of

effort builds confidence in the action of the group and the capacity of the group as a whole as ADT members provide a “boots on the ground” approach to demonstrate the United States resolve and willingness to help and share the day-to-day risks of the community. This is in stark contrast to the more typical military missions of running patrols out of and then returning to more secure firebases or forward operating bases. These local actions serve a diplomatic purpose and certainly break down cultural barriers by providing information and enduring skills that can build a more robust local economy. And because the information flow is two-way, the ADTs also become much more sensitive to tribal customs, leadership and heritage.

Informational

After decades of war the Afghani people and Agricultural base had been largely destroyed. The degradation of natural resources upon which some 80 percent of Afghans depended for their livelihood was a critical problem across the country.¹²

The missions of ADTs are to work to ensure that Afghan people are assisted in becoming self-reliant again through better farming techniques. “Empowering the people through information and education is one of the things these teams do best.”¹³

Classroom instruction and teaching the Afghans better farming practices during non-seasonal growing months provides focus and skill sets for year round agricultural efforts. It also greatly improves lines of communication by demonstrating persistent presence by the government of Afghanistan to help its people. This quality of information and continued support throughout the entire year by ADT keeps that much-needed continuity and builds local trust with the people. Concurrently and in coordination with the over-arching Information Operations (IO) campaign strategy, the sharing of good news through media outlets and public affairs offices informs the public and assists in the counterinsurgency effort and overall campaign.

Word of mouth from local village to local village provides positive news that highlights Afghan agricultural development programs as a success. This further supports the IO campaign as well as spurs the creation of information networks working to support the counterinsurgency fight. The ability to bring together governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, universities, and coalition partners to share this information is a powerful IO tool to be leveraged in the COIN.

An identified problem with the sharing of information is that some restrictive measures in the Department of Defense do not allow for fluid reach back to the ADTs' home States and to affiliated non-governmental organization (NGO) partners. Of particular concern is that ADT commanders and their Soldiers often find that it is difficult to declassify information so that it can be shared effectively to facilitate reach back capability. Much of this problem is solely because of the military's ubiquitous use of the Secret Internet Protocol Router Network (SIPRNet) even when dealing with predominantly unclassified information. This makes it extraordinarily cumbersome to winnow out relevant unclassified information to share with non-cleared or non-military partners. Language barriers are also an impediment when it comes to sharing information.

According to recent US government estimates, approximately 35 percent of the Afghan population speaks Pashto, and about 50 percent speaks Dari. Turkic languages (Uzbek and Turkmen) are spoken by about 11 percent of the population. There are also numerous other languages spoken in the country (Baluchi, Pashai, Nuristani, etc.), and bilingualism is very common.¹⁴

The problem associated with these language barriers are compounded by the lack of availability and vetted interpreters needed to speak the basic languages as well as their different dialects. This problem is compounded when one factors in the illiteracy rate. There is perhaps a 90 percent illiteracy rate. Accordingly, the ADTs ability to teach agricultural skills to farmers is hampered in much the same manner as teaching soldierly skills to the Afghan Army where it is not as easy as translating the U.S. Army's training materials into the Pashto or Dari languages spoken in Afghanistan

and then telling Afghan recruits to study them. A recent Associated Press story had this example:

Afghan army recruit Shahidullah Ahmadi can't read -- and neither can nine out of 10 soldiers in the Afghan National Army... "I face difficulties. If someone calls me and tells me to go somewhere, I can't read the street signs," Ahmadi, 27, a member of a logistics battalion, said while walking through downtown Kabul. "In our basic training, we learned a lot. Some of my colleagues who can read and write can take notes, but I've forgotten a lot of things, the types of things that might be able to save my life."¹⁵

Military

The ADT, as a military element of power, is a major component of the joint, combined arms team that is creating a positive effect for the country of Afghanistan and its people. As United States Senator Kit Bond stated in a recent speech concerning these teams, "One of the best remedies to terrorism is a paycheck and by helping Afghan farmers develop skills to support their families. These citizen-soldiers are literally sowing the seeds of peace in Afghanistan."¹⁶ Specifically, ADTs are a major part of the clear, hold, and build strategy used by coalition forces in the counterinsurgency fight in Afghanistan. They work along with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and are a third leg of the stool allowing for improving developmental efforts in the local communities.

The partnerships that these teams develop lend credibility by providing a non-kinetic approach. ADTs have become a great interagency partner; whose expertise is well suited for this civil–military partnership. Recently, President Obama said, "Civilian aid to Afghanistan will be restructured."¹⁷ In particular, Obama noted that the United States will emphasize agricultural development instead of big reconstruction projects to revitalize the nation's agricultural-based economy, to make an "immediate impact on the

lives of the Afghan people.”¹⁸ The key to the ADT is that they can implement projects in conjunction with seize, hold, build initiatives that can be seen immediately by the Afghan people. These visible and visceral improvements in their quality of life build trust and immediate rapport with our military forces. This sometimes intangible effect is something that will more easily allow Afghan government forces to hold the ground that has been seized from the Taliban.

ADTs also provide the essential things that the people need like security, means to survive by teaching the Afghans to grow their own food, and a means of to prosper through the marketing of their products. ADT projects are numerous and involve everything from basic gardening practices to large watershed and irrigation projects. There are also projects that teach bee keeping and livestock production: all of which will have a positive impact on unemployment, hunger and the ability to sustain future generations. Without such hope for the future, the lure of the narcotics trade and insurgent activity is more attractive. The ability of these ADT teams to make this contribution at local levels can also help in the long-term economic impact for the country. Lastly, stronger and vested economy siphons money from the insurgency itself, which relies heavily on illicit and black-market funding.

Economic

Economic recovery is difficult for any post-conflict government, especially ones like Afghanistan where poverty and illiteracy is so steep. The United Nations recognized the importance of the economic effort and said recently, “Recreating a viable economy after a prolonged period of violent conflict remains one of the most difficult challenges of peacebuilding.”¹⁹ Governments are faced with supporting economic recovery,

rebuilding infrastructure, restoring basic services to the people, all the while being faced with high unemployment causing social instability.

Natural resources are the first choice for revenue generation for many countries since they are often things that can be easily accessed by the people and marketed for quick financial return. In the case of Afghanistan, these natural resources have already been exploited over the years mainly due to occupation by the Soviet military forces and lack of governmental control. Further, systems must be in place to manage financial institutions and foreign investment, which requires a stable government and a national currency.

“Ultimately, we want to move beyond dependence upon international aid and build a thriving, legal, private sector-led economy that reduces poverty and enables all Afghans to live in dignity.”²⁰ In the aftermath of war, the ability of the natural resource base and the environment to support the people can be the determining factor for lasting peace. In the case of Afghanistan, people struggle to find food, water, shelter and energy supplies they need for day-to-day survival. Environmental stresses in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan have caused governmental vulnerability as evidenced by the Taliban becoming the ruling entity and the subsequent movement of al Qaeda into the area.

In Afghanistan, the degradation of natural resources, high population growth rates and widespread poverty deepened the inability of many Afghans to sustain a livelihood and has made the country increasingly vulnerable to occupation by outside groups such as al Qaeda. The creation of some type of employment and the infusion of cash into the economy was critical to support any type of recovery of local economies.

Warfare, lawlessness and food insecurity also made refugees of some four million Afghans, the equivalent to a quarter of the total country population at the time of the Soviet occupation. Infrastructure has been destroyed and many institutions and administrative systems have collapsed. The country is perhaps the most heavily land mined in the world and large areas cannot be entered without risk. The nation's biological resources are being rapidly degraded by uncontrolled grazing, cultivation, water extraction, hunting, and deforestation.

Funding from USAID, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) coupled with ADT personnel will produce long-term improvement by providing labor-intensive work programs and opportunities that provide income generation projects to help the poorest of people learn to sustain themselves.

Putting the country back on a path towards sustainable development will be a difficult task, requiring long-term support from the international community. If the political will exist, the actual day-to-day implementation will require overcoming the current problems, rebuilding institutional capacity, and restore balance to the natural resources of the country. On a positive note, Afghanistan has recorded rapid economic growth since 2001 thanks primarily to the construction sector that, assisted by foreign efforts, has rebuilt some of the country's infrastructure and private housing. "Agriculture, a dominant industry, has experienced strong growth, tempered by several severe droughts in 2001-2007."²¹

ADT Contributions to the Region

Since 2008 and the implementation of the ADT program, the ADTs are making a sustainable positive difference across the region. The Afghan farmers are improving

their own lives through sustainable non-opiate agricultural and it appears that the narcotic production in many provinces has dramatically decreased. In Nangarhar province the United Nations has declared that poppy production has been virtually eliminated. ADTs have contributed to this positive trend.

The successes of ADTs speak for themselves through the Afghan people. “Tribal leaders in Afghanistan provinces are requesting additional teams.”²² This demonstrates the importance of this effort of soft power in the COIN environment. The ADTs are continuing to make inroads by capacity building projects that will increase opportunities and contribute to improving the lives of the people of Afghanistan by securing and stabilizing the country. Additionally, the capability of these teams to reach back and leverage the universities, institutions, and agricultural communities in the United States will only make partnerships stronger. These professional partnerships will have a long lasting effect on the outcome and future of Afghanistan and will enable future generations the ability to sow the seeds of both sustained nourishment and peace.

The role and makeup of the ADT is nothing new to the National Guard. The Guard has traditionally participated with interagency partners at the State, Local, Federal levels and International levels. The Guard regularly participates in large-scale civil-military operations that involve multiple partners from the civilian sector during disaster mitigation or through our numerous partnerships in the State Partnership Program (SPP).

Since its inception in 1993 the SPP program links states with partner countries for the purpose of supporting the security cooperation objectives of the Regional

Combatant Commanders. The mission allows using the unique civil-military nature of the Guard to interact with both active and reserve forces of foreign countries. The partners actively participate in a host of engagement activities from training exercises, civic leader visits and medical events. Developed countries around the world are interested in taking on this role and we should encourage them to utilizing their knowledge, skills and abilities in programs such as the ADT. Such “soft power” approaches will be more readily embraced by many nations uncomfortable or unwilling to enter into more kinetic operational alliances.

ADT Results

The results thus far are impressive. Looking at the case study from Nangarhar Province, President George W. Bush in 2008 noted that: “The Nangarhar PRT and the Missouri National Guard ADT have helped make Nangarhar one of the most stable and secure provinces in Afghanistan. The ADT consisted of the Army National Guard and embedded civilian specialists. The specialists provided technical assistance and training to improve agriculture production, processing and marketing.”²³

“The Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team and National Guard ADT contributed the following results:

- Approximately 100K Afghans have returned to the province.
- In 2008, Nangarhar was declared poppy-free by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime – dropping from almost 20,000 opiated hectares (200K square miles in 2007).
- All 22 districts in Nangarhar have all-weather paved roads connecting to the main highway.

- Nangarhar is now one of the most productive agricultural regions in Afghanistan, and the reconstruction team is looking to expand and improve on irrigation networks.
- The PRT supports work on the road and bridge construction, school, governmental buildings, watershed management, and marketing infrastructure.
- The Nangarhar PRT is providing micro-grants to small businesses and enabling them to re-open and expand restocking inventory, to restore business equipment, and to hire employees.”²⁴

These accomplishments are just one example of many where the ADT coupled with the PRTs and interagency partnerships of other organizations have made and continue to make a difference in the lives of the Afghan people. This aligns with the Obama Administration’s comprehensive strategy on governance at the national and sub-national levels. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry recently stated: At the provincial and the district levels we are working with jointly with our military through our provincial reconstruction teams, our district development and working groups and our district support teams, which help build Afghan capacity, particularly in the areas of greatest insecurity, in southern and eastern Afghanistan.”²⁵

Ambassador Eikenberry further stated: “This is part of the counterinsurgency strategy designed to protect the people and make their lives better. A more effective government lessens the support for the insurgency and rebuilding the farm sector, in particular, is essential for the Afghan government to reduce the pool of unemployed men who form the recruiting base for extremists.”²⁶

By having a work force that is engaged in sustaining the local community, showing that the government can work, and by feeding and sustaining their own people this will lead to less need of reliance on the rule of the Taliban and give democracy an opportunity to work.

Most reasonably the Afghan people want to live in a free society and they want a peaceful environment to raise their families. They want to be able to provide food, shelter and live safely without the threat of domination. They would like to see their children educated and they believe in a value system that would give them a better opportunity to live in peace. News reports from inside Afghanistan have recently shown that many people want to support a government and a rule of law governmental process, which is evident by their recent elections. If all these things can come together for the people of Afghanistan, then Al-Qaeda will be more easily defeated. Even with some elements of the Taliban remaining intact, the Afghan people can learn to govern themselves. A stronger sustainable economy will pave the way for a successful mentorship program and will more easily allow Afghans to make their own decisions.

A strong stable agrarian economy capable of sustaining itself through the growing, trading, and moving of products throughout the country will certainly lend itself to decreased production of opium and increased production of other natural resources. The bottom-line is that any strategy for rebuilding Afghanistan does include the kinetic rooting out the remaining elements of al Qaeda and radical Taliban, but the emphasis must remain on developing a sustainable economy by leveraging all the elements of national power used in concert. A temporary increase in military force may be

necessary to set the conditions for long-term progress, but unless the other elements of power are sufficiently employed, the Afghanistan project will end in failure.

ADTs Role in the Future

The key to success in Afghanistan is capacity building in many different venues. First and foremost, all US efforts must be synchronized. The United States military is currently fighting a counterinsurgency campaign and that effort must include coordination of all development efforts. USAID is the primary development agency and should focus their combined effort as well. Department of State should also be focusing a combined effort to maximize unity of effort. This unity of effort must be present at every level of the COIN operation. All actions taken have to be coordinated or they stand the risk of being exploited by the insurgency. Without a strong unity of effort from all governmental agencies, the road ahead will be difficult if not impossible.

The Afghan government must become involved in all phases of interagency coordination as well. The government must be seeking to create a successful and competitive free market economy that can compete in the international community. A linchpin nested in this interagency cooperation should be the ADT. The ADT can successfully work at the local level to provide local farmer education and outreach within the local communities. The ADT must continue to reach out to the local agricultural learning institutions to provide capabilities to these institutions in the realm of technical support, logistical support, and educational support.

This can be done through a myriad of actions to include: long-term plot research farms and demonstration farm construction, short-term data collection, and best management practices shown to students and local farmers. By applying these actions, capacity building, infrastructure, and increased production, Afghans will become locally

and regionally independent. This regional stability will build confidence in the government and could have a positive effect on insurgent influence within all regions. Through providing these bilateral associations that are military, interagency, and Afghan led, through expanding educational partnerships, and through developing a strong and comprehensive agricultural strategy, Afghanistan can crawl, walk, run its way to independence and clear the way for a lasting American exit strategy.

Endnotes

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³ Donna Miles, "Mullen: Talks Favor Broad Afghanistan Solution," United States Dept of Defense online, November 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=56780>
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